THE SWAN 19

Five Bucolic Epigrams

Theocritus

Translated by Peter Lamborn Wilson

September 2022

Five Bucolic Epigrams for Daphnis

Imitations by Peter Lamborn Wilson
based on the translation by A. Lang, London, 1910

I. *Inscription for Rustic Altar*

Dewy roses tufted thyme
cut for you Heliconian ladies
shadowy laurels for you O Pythian Apollo
since the rock of Delphi sprouts them
for your mystic service. This altar
will be blood-strained by the
                white horned goat
that browses now on turpentiny tips
                of terebinth boughs.

II. *The Herd-boy's Offering*

Daphnis white-limbed Daphnis the one
who pipes his flute to pastoral strains
offers to Pan the following—
                his pan-pipes
his shepherd's-crosier, a nice javelin
a fawn skin—plus, the very bag in which
once upon a time he used to carry the
                apples of love

III. *Picture This*

Out to trap rabbits one noon
Daphnis didn't you fall asleep
on a pile of leaves

Oh
you were so tired on the hill
but now look out
Pan is
on yr track
& Priapus
(wreathed
in golden ivy round his brow)
now about to LEAP into
yr cave of sleep—watch out
flee
run
wake UP
run
shed

this heavy sleep that falls on you

IV. *Priapus*

Listen fellow goatherd, down that oak-leafy
lane over there you'll find an idol fresh
hacked from, fig-wood—him of the "third leg"—
barky & earless—but potent in
love-magic.
Holy the grove that
surrounds him & holy the ceaseless
stream strumming its rockfall, everything
green—laurel myrtle scented
cypresses.

Everywhere there wild vines flaunt
baby grapes & flourish tender tendrils
blackbirds sing Spring in wild tones
nightingales answer with love-complaynts
spewing from beaks in honey flow.

There
please say o prayer to generous Priapus
to free me of love for that Daphnis &
promise on my behalf (if fulfilled)
I'll sacrifice a goatling to him.

But
should he say nay—O well then
let me WIN the love of Daphnis
& I'll slaughter <u>three</u> victims—calf
shaggy he-goat & a hand-reared lamb
I've been saving up for just such an
Occasion, ah if only the god would hear my prayer.

V. *The Hoe-down*

In the Muses' name O blow
so dulcet sir thru yr double-flute
I'll chime in on harp & Daphnis
(the young cowboy)
will breathe so charmingly into his
pan-pipes
we'll take up position under this
shaggy oak
outside the cave & steal away
goat-foot Pan's
sleep.

[3rd ce. BC
Alexandria, Egypt
In the time of
Ptolemy II Philadelphus]

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